

Tri-State

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Developers present plan for office complex

CHARLES TOWN, W.VA.

■ The developers say there will not be residential housing in the development proposed next to Harpers Ferry (W.Va.) National Historical Park.

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Developers of a controversial office building project proposed next to Harpers Ferry (W.Va.) National Historical Park presented their idea Thursday to the Jefferson County Commission, saying they will not include

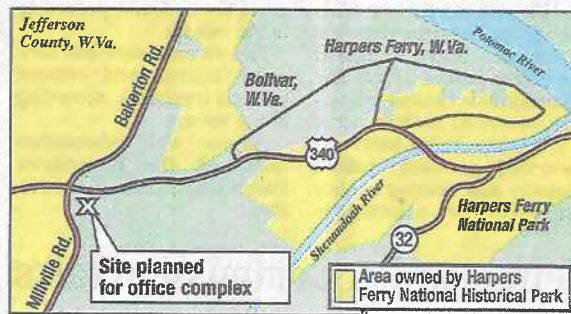
any residential housing in the development and they will be flexible in how office buildings are designed at the site.

The developers disagreed with Harpers Ferry National Historical Park officials who have said the development would be in the line of sight of Civil War battlefields in the area.

J. Michael Cassell, attorney for developers Gene Capriotti, Herb Jonkers and Jim Gibson, continued to argue that the office space project and a proposed 150-room hotel would be an ideal way to create more high-paying jobs in Jefferson County and save county residents from having to commute to nearby cities.

"I think it does so much for our folks here," Cassell said.

Commissioner Greg Corliss said he agreed that more job opportunities need to be cre-



ated in the county, and Commissioner Rusty Morgan said the PowerPoint presentation by Cassell and the developers was "very interesting."

When the meeting started, Commissioner Jim Surkamp asked Cassell if the developers are proposing a rezoning to allow the project. If so, a public hearing would have to

be held, Surkamp said.

Cassell said the developers will make a rezoning request later. Thursday's meeting was designed as an information session for the commission, Cassell said.

Before the debate about the project moved to the commission, there had been criticism about how the proposal would

"I think it does so much for our folks here."

— J. Michael Cassell,
attorney for the developers
of the proposed office complex

affect Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

More than 100 people showed up at two Charles Town city government meetings before the city council decided April 2 not to annex the property into the city.

Developers said they wanted to annex the project into the city because they believed the county was not interested in it.

The proposal being presented to the county does not include two properties that were included in the Charles Town annexation proposal. Those properties are Alstadt's Corner and

Bugler's Rest, which are south of the intersection of Millville Road and U.S. 340.

The project now concentrates on developing the Old Standard quarry site, which is in the same area.

Although the developers could have as many as 1,600 single-family units on part of the property, the developers have agreed not to build any houses, Cassell said.

Opponents have said they are worried the project could cause traffic congestion in the area.

Most of the 410-acre Old Standard property is zoned agricultural, but Cassell questioned how the property could fit into that category. Cassell described how the property was used as a quarry and that the county's landfill once operated there.

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Cassell said it makes sense for the property to be rezoned to commercial for the "additional jobs that will come."

As the developers have done in previous meetings, Cassell showed the 100-foot deep lake that is on the property that was created by the quarry operations. There is a 90-foot cliff along one side of the lake, and the hotel that is proposed to be built at one end of the lake will have different levels that will staircase down to the lake's edge

in a "Frank Lloyd Wright" style, Cassell said.

Limestone waste and old buildings are on the property, and developers told the commission that much of the material will be used in the development of the project, including construction of a four-lane road that will serve the office buildings and hotel.

Cassell said the project and its 2 million square feet of office space will generate about \$4.4 million in real estate and hotel tax revenue, and about 1.4 miles of Shenandoah River riverfront

property at the site will be open to the public and will include boat ramps, restroom facilities and parklike settings.

"Those are all very enticing," Surkamp said.

Morgan asked Cassell if the lake could be open for public access, but Cassell said he did not believe that would be a good idea given that there was a swimming death there.

Morgan asked if other open land at the site could be set aside for public access. Cassell said that is possible.

Cassell said the developers

will submit a formal rezoning request for the property and the commission said it wants the Jefferson County Development Authority and the Jefferson County Planning Commission to review the proposal.

Commissioner Dale Manuel said after the meeting that he was thinking about the people who have been opposed to the project.

Manuel said "everyone was listening intently" to Cassell's presentation, but he emphasized that none of the commissioners made any commitments.